improvement in road and rail linkages with the two ports?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T. G. VENKATARAMAN): (a) During 9th Five Year Plan 1997—2002, it is proposed to enhance the POL handling capacity of Haldia by 7.5 million tonnes.

(b) Yes, Sir. It is proposed to take up infrastructure development by improvement/strengthening of roads in an around the Docks maintained by Calcutta Port Trust in phases. The railway tracks of Calcutta Dock system have been planned to be replaced during 9th Five Year Plan. Two additional locomotives are proposed to be procured at Haldia. Development of additional railway infrastructure inside and outside Haldia Dock is also proposed to be undertaken.

Sea worthiness of bulk carriers

2453. SHRI JAYANT KUMAR MALHOUTRA: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Maritime Safety Committee raised the sea-worthiness age limit of bulk carriers from 20 to 30 years overlooking the recommendations of the International Maritime Organisation;

(b) if so, whether it is also a fact that the mounting loss of ships in the recent past is due to the fact that aging ships have been pressed into service;

(c) if so, whether Government propose to undertake a comprehensive review of the safety standards of the bulk carriers on a priority basis; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T. G. VENKATRAMAN): (a) No Sir. The Maritime Safety Committee of the International Maritime Organisation did not consider any such proposal.

(b) to (d) Do not arise.

Sethusamudram Canal Project

2454. SHRI S. MUTHU MANI: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken any decision to start work of SETHUSAMUDRAM CANAL PROJECT within the current year itself;

(b) whether his Ministry has requested the Ministry of Finance to allot finance for the said project;

(c) if so, the response from the Ministry of Finance in this regard;

(d) whether his Ministry is also considering to start the work of the said project with the help of either Japan or Germany; and

(e) whether the experts from the Japan or Germany visited the site of Sethusamudram Canal Project, and if so, what were their comments on the said project?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T. G. VENKATRAMAN): (a) No, Sir.

(b) to (e) The Department of Economic Affairs has been requested to pose the Project for technical assistance from the German and Japan Governments for conducting feasibility report.

Declaration of river Godavari as National Waterway

2455. SHRI YERRA NARAYANASWAMY: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government of Andhra Pradesh submitted a proposal